

Carson Chance was deep in thought when he first saw her. At first he thought it was a mirage or maybe his imagination, but as he got closer and slowed his Harley Davidson to a stop on the side of Highway 80, just in front of her; there was no question it was his lucky day. He stared at her as the wind blew her long auburn hair into her eyes. She swished it out of her face and it fell back around her shoulders as she smiled up at him. Mesmerized by her beautiful brown eyes, he quickly came back to reality and turned off the engine on his bike. Putting the kick stand down, he got off his bike, removed his helmet and took off his riding gloves. "Are you looking for a ride to Dallas?" he asked.

"Would I be out here on the side of the road with my arm extended out if I weren't?"

Carson laughed. "I suppose not. Hop on."

"I'm Amy."

"Carson."

"What's your first name?" Amy demanded.

"That is my first name. Carson, Carson Chance,"

"Like Johnny Carson?"

"Yeah, I guess, except Carson is my first name." Carson was fascinated by Amy's low, sexy voice and hoped he would get a chance to have a real conversation with her before they got to Dallas.

The Harley was now cruising down Highway 80 at sixty miles an hour making it difficult to hear. Since Carson relied on both his weak hearing and lip reading, he decided he would pull off around Terrell, Texas, and get something to drink. He'd made the trip back to the VA Hospital in Shreveport, Louisiana, several times on his bike and knew there was a Dairy Queen drive-in a quarter mile off the highway so he turned off and pulled in. "Duty calls," he said. They both got off the bike and she pulled off her helmet,

shaking her hair out. Carson thought it was the sexist thing he'd ever seen, and took a closer look at her. She had deep-set brown eyes, luscious thick pink lips and her skin was flawless. She was only a few inches shorter than he was and he figured she wore at least a 34D-cup bra.

Her silhouette was perfect with all the curves in the right places. She had a small waist and tight slim hips. Carson was quite a prize himself. He was just over six feet tall, lifted weights and limited his drinking so his abs were tight and Amy thought he had a really cute butt. He had brown semi-curly hair that was combed back over his ears and a dimple in the right corner of his mouth when he smiled. His lean bronze face was well offset by his fiery hazel eyes, which had the faculty of seeing things as though he had a wide-angle lens. Preferring variety, picking up girls came easy for him, and he had no intentions of ever getting married.

They entered the Dairy Queen, ordered some food at the counter, and Carson extracted his wallet from his back pocket and paid for it. When he returned from the men's room, he walked over taking the bench across from her. Amy put five dollars on the table in front of him. "I don't expect you to pay my way." Carson shrugged his shoulders and picked up the cash. The restaurant was almost empty, so the waitress brought their food to their table instead of calling out their number. Amy got up to go wash her hands, and Carson waited for her to return before he picked up his hamburger. "You didn't have to wait on me," she said, taking a seat on the bench across from him.

"Are you always this bossy?"

Amy studied him for a minute and then picked up a french fry stuffing it into her mouth.

"Look, my bike got stolen and when I called the police, they treated me like a piece of trash. They didn't want to believe me. The last guy that gave me a ride thought I was a prostitute and offered to pay me ten dollars for a blow job. I'm tired of taking crap off of men and the reason I gave you the money for my burger was because I didn't want you to think I owed you something."

“All right, I’m not the enemy here. You put yourself out there and I simply offered you a ride, nothing else.”

“Look, you seem like a nice guy and I’m sorry to take my frustrations out on you. The truth is I’m from Austin, Texas, and I dropped out of school. I went to Monroe, Louisiana, with a friend and then he met up with an old high school sweetheart and kicked me out. I stole some money from his wallet and left. I should have known he was a loser. I don’t have much luck with men. They seem to always take advantage of me and I’m sick of it.”

Carson continued eating and took a sip of his root beer. “Why were you on your way to Dallas and not Austin?”

“My dad told me if I dropped out of school not to bother coming back home and I know he means it. He’s really strict and this isn’t the first time I’ve skipped out on school.”

“What are your plans when you get to Dallas?” Carson asked.

“I don’t know. Try and get a job maybe. I have a couple of girlfriends that moved there after school was out last summer and I figured I could look them up. I’ll figure something out. I always do. Enough about me. What do you do?” she asked looking at his finger for a wedding ring.

“I’m a private investigator.” He sat back in the booth and looked out the window.

“No way. Were you on a job in Louisiana?”

“No, I have to go to the VA Hospital for a check-up every so often and I was headed home.”

“VA Hospital? Were you in the military?”

“Army until I got injured in Vietnam.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry. I feel bad that I was so rude to you at first.” Carson laughed.

“You and I have a lot in common,” he said. “Edgy on the outside but we have a few soft spots on the inside.” Amy laughed and Carson thought she had the sexiest laugh he’d ever heard. It was more like a rumble in her throat and her smile was contagious.

“Edgy? I’ve been called a lot of things, but edgy isn’t one of them.” The tension was finally gone and they were beginning to have a real conversation. Amy was animated when she spoke and used her hands in the conversation. Her nails were long with clear polish and Carson tried hard to find something he didn’t like about her. He found it difficult to take his eyes off her.

Carson looked at his watch. “It’s going to be dark in an hour and it’s difficult to see cyclists riding on the highway at night. Best we get on with it. Where do you want me to take you?”

Amy sighed and bit her lower lip. “Do you know if there is a cheap motel close to where you live? I don’t want to put you out. I took some money out of my friend’s wallet before I left.”

“Look, I was in a bad situation once myself and a good friend helped me out. I live in a two bedroom house but I only have one bed. You can have it tonight and I’ll sleep on the couch.” Carson took out his identification card and showed her his PI license. “Just so you know I’m legit.”

Amy looked at it and smiled. “Actually I didn’t think you were making it up, but thanks for showing me.”

“I’m curious,” Carson said. “Just how old are you?”

Amy let out a big sigh. “Eighteen.” She looked down not wanting to make eye contact.

Carson stood up and put a dollar tip on the table. “We better get going.”

When they took off, Amy tightened her arms around Carson’s waist and hugged his back side laying her chin on his shoulder. Carson was eight years older than Amy, but he found her utterly fascinating and extremely sexy. He usually preferred woman closer to his own age. Most girls younger than twenty-one needed too much pampering and had too many insecurities. Amy seemed different. If she had any insecurities, she certainly hid them well. He was smitten with her edgy charm and smiled when he thought about what she said about being called edgy.

Amy had hardly moved while they made their way back to Dallas. He called her name twice, and when she didn't answer he assumed she had fallen asleep. When he pulled up in his driveway, he took each one of her hands into his and slowly swivelled around. She nuzzled her head under his neck and he could hear her easy breathing. "Amy, wake up, we're here." Amy raised her head up and looked around.

"Where are we?" she said yawning.

"Home. I need to get off and open the garage door. Are you awake?"

She yawned again, "I guess so." Carson couldn't help but smile at her.

After he opened the door, he turned around and Amy was stretching her arms out, and when he walked over to move the bike into the garage, she wrapped her arms around his neck. Carson picked her up and carried her inside to his bedroom. When he laid her down on his bed, she grabbed hold of the pillow and turned into a fetal position, clutching the pillow in front of her. Shaking his head, he stood up and looked at her, wondering what he had gotten himself into. Before leaving her alone, he reached down and unzipped her boots and took them off. Pulling the covers up over her, he turned on the bathroom light in the hall and closed the door just enough so the light didn't shine directly into his room.

After pulling his bike in, Carson closed the garage door and went back inside. He went to the refrigerator, took out a beer and then walked over and turned on the television. A rerun of "Adam 12" came on. It was a police drama about two police officers in Los Angeles, Pete Malloy and Jim Reed. It was entertaining enough but not one of his favorite programs. Finishing his beer, he took off his boots and went into the bathroom to brush his teeth. He glared at the image staring back at him in the mirror and thought of his older brother, Colton, whom he hadn't seen in months. His mind drifted back to the time they were separated. He knew it wasn't his brother's fault about his troubled childhood, but in some ways he did blame him.